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SUBJECT: SUBJECT: KRASNOYARSK ELECTION - QUIET ON THE  
SIBERIAN FRONT

Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) A joke is circulating in Krasnoyarsk that the regional electoral commission is taking care to make sure the population doesn't falsify the elections. With less than two weeks before polling day, virtually everyone "knows" the election outcome -- a solid majority for United Russia; enough votes to put the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) in the Duma; and a few "crumbs" for the rest. The only remaining questions are how many voters will turn out and how large United Russia's take will be. The United Russia headquarters is smugly confident, while the other parties complain of harassment, media bias, and the misuse of administration resources. END SUMMARY.

United Russia Smugly Confident  
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¶2. (SBU) The chairman of United Russia's regional executive committee, Aleksey Dodatko, exudes the confidence of a veteran skipper, navigating home under clear skies. He and his staff have tallied the numbers and calmly predict that United Russia will bring in 60 percent of the vote, up from the 45 percent success in the April regional legislative elections and about equal to that which Putin received in ¶2003. Problems that have shaken the party in other regions, such as rising prices on food, did not lead to a drop in the party's numbers, according to Dodatko. (The governor nonetheless opened special markets for peasant-farmers to sell directly to city consumers.) Dodatko's only remaining challenge was to ensure that the KPRF didn't get a larger share of the vote than in the April elections -- about 20 percent of the voting population. The key to success was managing the turnout, which he believed would be no more than 45 percent of eligible voters.

¶3. (SBU) Dodatko described United Russia as the party of "leaders" and looked at the election as social legitimization of the current course. He defended his party's decision not to participate in debates on the grounds that other parties had nothing to offer but criticism and were not ready to discuss alternative plans for resolving real issues. The "For a Just Russia" party were "running after the train," having faltered in the weeks following Putin's decision to lead United Russia's party list. He likewise dismissed the Communists and liberal Union of Right Forces (SPS), the former as "jokes" or a "caricature" and the latter as ideologically adrift. When asked about the protest vote, now that "against all" was no longer an option for voters, Dodatko seemed unconcerned, noting that there had been little impact in the April elections or even an increase in spoiled ballots.

Opponents are Hapless and Unhappy

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14. (SBU) Besides the KPRF, which appears from press reports to be more or less satisfied with a minority position in the next Duma, Krasnoyarsk's other "opposition" parties are frustrated by a lack of access to the media and United Russia's bullying use of administrative resources to bolster its already strong position. Parties on the left -- KPRF, "Just Russia", and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's LDPR -- were unable (or unwilling) to meet with Embassy, but local newspapers report problems with confiscation of campaign materials and general harassment.

15. (SBU) On the right, party leaders from Yabloko and SPS complained about problems with the administration but appear helpless to address those concerns. Yabloko regional chairman Vladimir Kopytov said that militia officers had detained him without reason to keep him from "interfering" in a United Russia rally on November 4. He claimed that the administration had blocked his party from posting campaign billboards by "threatening" local advertising firms. (Poloff noted United Russia billboards were sprinkled throughout the city, but only a few solitary advertisements for LDPR, SR, and SPS.) Sergey Shakmatov of SPS reiterated his party's irritation with the administration's seizure of campaign materials and likewise claimed about administration interference in the party's programs.

16. (SBU) As in other regions, United Russia's domination of the regional electoral commission creates a further challenge for the opposition parties, denying them a transparent and impartial court in which to air concerns. Chairman of the Krasnoyarsk Electoral Commission Konstantin Bocharov dismissed SPS's appeal related to the confiscation of campaign materials as "politicking," noting that both the

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Central Electoral Commission and a regional court had upheld the regional commission's decision. He expressed pride that his commission had only one ruling overturned -- a "technical error" during the April elections.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: Conversations with others outside the political parties offered an admittedly anecdotal picture of a population largely disconnected from the election process. Sergey Kim, a regional television journalist, said that public complacency resulted from the region's strong economy and "stable" political structure (so stable that the Deputy Governor resigned out of "boredom," according to Kim). Sociologist Irina Muratova of the Komkon-Yeast Siberia polling firm said that without administrative pressure not even 40 percent of population would turn out for elections. Indeed, the number of "agitators" on the streets hawking a new cell phone plan easily outnumbered the few party activists waving flags or passing out flyers. Contacts in town, from taxi drivers to businessmen, joked about United Russia's attempt to take credit for improved roads and seemed resigned to a carefully stage-managed election.  
BURNS